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Sixty-eighth session

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93rd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 11 June 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 4

Election of the President of the General Assembly

Election of the President of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session

The President: In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now invite members to proceed to the election of the President of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session.

May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 33/138, of 19 December 1978, the President of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session should be elected from among the African States. In that connection, I have been informed by the Chair of the Group of African States for the month of May 2014 that the Group has endorsed His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda, for the presidency of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session.

Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, I therefore declare His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa of the Republic of Uganda elected by acclamation President of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session. On behalf of the Assembly, I wholeheartedly congratulate Mr. Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session.

I now invite His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, who has just been elected President of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session, to take the floor.

Mr. Kutesa (Uganda): Almost 70 years ago, this Organization, the United Nations, was founded with the aim of, among other things, saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, reaffirming faith in fundamental human rights and promoting social progress and better standards of living in larger freedom. It has since remained central to global efforts to find solutions to the problems that challenge humanity, through the common endeavour of all States.

Fifty-two years ago, my country, Uganda, joined the United Nations family. We are an active and fully committed Member of the Organization, and committed even more to the work of the General Assembly. I am therefore honoured and truly grateful to all here for unanimously electing me as President of the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, a sign not only of the Assembly's collective trust and confidence in me personally, but also of recognition of the contribution that Uganda has made. I would especially like to thank my region, Africa, for endorsing my candidature and for the unwavering support it has given me.

Mr. President, I thank you for your leadership and for setting the stage during the current session. A number of intergovernmental processes are ongoing, and will feed into negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. I also appreciate your willingness to facilitate transition and continuity in the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

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I would like to thank and commend the Secretary-General for his personal commitment, dedication and tireless work in advancing the agenda of the United Nations. I look forward to working with everyone on our Organization's priorities.

As we gather here today, our world continues to be confronted with various challenges of global reach and impact. They include poverty and hunger; underdeveloped education and health services; unemployment; poor and inadequate infrastructure in many developing countries; insufficient and expensive energy; climate change and rising sea-levels; armed conflicts; and emerging threats to peace and security such as transnational organized crime, terrorism, piracy and human trafficking. Collectively, we must continue to take concerted action to address those challenges. That is what has made the United Nations a strong, unique and indispensable organization.

Fourteen years ago, world leaders adopted the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), committing to achieve eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, with a focus on socioeconomic development issues such as poverty, health and education. While significant progress has been made in some areas, it has been uneven across goals, countries and regions. As we work on a post-2015 development agenda, we must ensure that the sustainable development goals being formulated build on the foundation laid by the MDGs. It is also essential that we develop an agenda that is transformative, with the eradication of poverty and hunger and the promotion of sustained and inclusive economic growth as its overarching objectives. It should be holistic, action-oriented and universally applicable, while paying due attention to the various regional and national realities as well as levels of development.

As part of the post-2015 development agenda, we will have to address means of implementation in terms of financial resources, technology development and transfer and capacity-building. That will require a strengthened global partnership, one that will foster partnerships between and among Governments, provide for an increased role for the private sector, ensure a fair international trading regime and foster national and foreign direct investments. Our ultimate objective should be to create a transformative agenda that supports global solutions, guides national development efforts and empowers people to improve their livelihoods and determine their own future.

Climate change, which continues largely unabated, is one of the defining global challenges of our time. Its adverse effects are evident in persistent extreme weather conditions, floods, extended droughts and rising sea levels. There can be no doubt that those effects threaten humankind's very existence. Small island States in particular are becoming increasingly vulnerable. To preserve planet Earth for ourselves and succeeding generations, we have an obligation to combat climate change, through, among other things, mitigation and adaptation measures. Climate-change financing and technology transfer will be particularly central to that cause. It is therefore important that during the sixty-ninth session we give appropriate impetus and momentum to the ongoing process under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in order to reach a global agreement on climate change in 2015.

The coming year will be of historic significance, since it will mark the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. Today, the world is vastly different from what it was in 1945. While the principles of the Organization remain solid, the changing world obliges us to adjust to new and changing realities. Central to that is the continued revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council and other relevant United Nations bodies. The intergovernmental negotiation process on Security Council reform has not yet made the desired progress. I will be working with every Member State to make further progress on this particular issue.

At the operational level, experience has shown that fostering cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations positively contributes to development and the maintenance of peace and security. We have seen many successes in many parts of the world, especially Africa, where the United Nations and various regional organizations have utilized their unique and complementary capacities to resolve conflicts. I am convinced that this cooperation has yet to reach its full potential and should be substantially strengthened. I also believe that we should strengthen cooperation and coordination among regional organizations themselves to address common challenges.

We should make greater efforts and launch more initiatives aimed at achieving the peaceful settlement of disputes, as envisaged in Article 33 of the Charter

of the United Nations. Conflict prevention is a cheaper and more sustainable option.

In post-conflict situations, we need to step up peacebuilding efforts and support countries in building effective national institutions. That is essential for avoiding relapse and for enabling those countries to move towards sustainable peace, reconstruction, economic recovery and development.

We should also strengthen our collective resolve to counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism. That tension has often manifested itself in violent terrorist attacks, serving as a constant reminder of the threat of extremist ideology. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is an important initiative aimed at improving tolerance, understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions. I will support further enhancement of the Alliance's role towards that end.

I will focus on further advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in the sixty-ninth session, during which we will mark the twentieth anniversary of the groundbreaking Beijing meeting that provided a framework and road map for promoting women's rights and achieving gender equality. Since 1995, the United Nations and the international community have made significant progress in advancing gender equality, but there remains a lot of work to be done.

That reminds me of the experience of one Nabanja, a married woman and mother of four children in Kashongi village in my parliamentary constituency, who acquired land with her husband in 2010. Two weeks ago, in my constituency, Nabanja told me that her husband had sold the land without her knowledge, leaving her and her children with no home or means of survival. There are several such examples the world over that put in sharp focus the need to seize this historic opportunity to galvanize action and mobilize all actors for accelerated and effective advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women under the leadership of UN-Women.

I will be sharing with the General Assembly, in due course, my proposals on how to effectively move all the aforementioned priorities forward, with its support.

I am proposing the theme for the sixty-ninth session to be "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda". The theme builds on the important work and progress being made in the current session. It underscores the need to focus not only on delivering or agreeing the post-2015 development agenda, but also, most important, on ensuring its effective implementation.

I am motivated by putting people at the centre of everything we do. I am motivated by the need for socioeconomic transformation. I look forward to working with the General Assembly to develop an agenda that will eradicate poverty and hunger and create sustained and inclusive growth, employment and better livelihoods for all.

In that endeavour, we can all draw inspiration from the words of the late President Nelson Mandela, who, in his speech at an event of the "Campaign to Make Poverty History" held in London in 2005, said,

> "Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom."

We truly have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build "the future we want". Fifty-one years ago, in 1963, President John F. Kennedy in his address to the General Assembly in this Hall said,

> "Never before has man had such capacity to control his own environment: to end thirst and hunger; to conquer poverty and disease, to banish illiteracy and massive human misery. We have the power to make this the best generation of mankind in the history of the world — or to make it the last." (*A/PV.1209, p. 6*)

If that was applicable to his generation 51 years ago, it is even more applicable to today's generation. The scale and reach of most of the challenges we face, coupled with the limited capacity of many of those worst affected, requires that we address them collectively. The United Nations exists to find solutions through our combined efforts.

I will endeavour to guide the work of the General Assembly in an active and effective manner. My pledge to the Assembly is my firm commitment to being accessible, transparent, fair and balanced, and I count on its support and cooperation.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, President-elect for the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Permit me now to make a statement.

I would like to extend my congratulations to Minister Kutesa on his election by acclamation as President of the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

As President-elect, Mr. Kutesa brings to the role significant experience and extensive background in politics, law and the private sector. He has served as his country's Minister for Foreign Affairs since 2005, during which he has led and overseen major activities and events, including Uganda's term in the Security Council in 2009-2010. He also has over 30 years of legislative experience as an elected Member of Parliament in Uganda. Undoubtedly, those positions, among other prominent roles he has held, will serve him well as he takes on the task of being the next President of the General Assembly.

The President-elect will assume the Office at a critical time for the United Nations when Member States will begin the long and arduous process of elaborating the post-2015 development agenda, the end result of which must be inclusive and people-centred and must be of immense significance and importance for both the people of today and the many generations to come. As President-elect, he will be expected to guide that process throughout the sixty-ninth session so that, at the start of the next, the Member States will be well positioned to adopt a new global development framework that is ambitious, focused and leads to meaningful change.

With his election by acclamation today, Member States have bestowed on him the initial trust that is necessary to commence that mammoth task.

Over the next three months, my team and I will continue to set the stage for the new agenda, including by convening a two-day high-level stocktaking event on 8 and 9 September. That event will enable Member States and other stakeholders to share their views on inputs to the Secretary-General's synthesis report, which will form the basis of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.

Finally, I wish to affirm that in the period leading up to the formal assumption of this Office by President-elect Kutesa on 16 September, my team and I are available for any support required and offer our full cooperation. We will continue to work with his team so as to ensure a smooth and seamless transition.

Once again, I congratulate and welcome President-elect Kutesa and wish him every success as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session

As a lawyer, parliamentarian, Finance Minister and Foreign Minister, Mr. Kutesa brings wide-ranging experience to the job. I wish him every success as he takes up his important responsibilities.

The position of President of the General Assembly demands a variety of skills. I saw that for myself when I served as Chef de Cabinet to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. One must be able to build bridges among all Member States, not just the most powerful ones. One needs patience, since negotiations and consultations can take time. At times, one serves as a quiet guide, a messenger and a seeker of consensus. At all times, the President of the General Assembly is guided above all by the values, principles and obligations of the Charter of the United Nations, whose seventieth anniversary will be celebrated during Mr. Kutesa's term.

Those many roles will be especially important during the upcoming session of the Assembly, when many critical streams of work will converge and reach the moment of truth. Our efforts to accelerate our work for the Millennium Development Goals will enter the home stretch. Discussions by Member States on the period beyond 2015 will move towards what we hope will be an inspiring yet practical vision and a concise set of goals that reflect the many voices we have heard and will lay out the path for a new and transformative sustainable development agenda. On the grave overarching challenge of climate change, the Climate Summit on 23 September and the Conference of the Parties in Lima in December will be key moments to mobilize solutions on the ground and the ambition for a new global agreement next year.

The Assembly will also be called on to address other key concerns, including disarmament, humanitarian assistance, the special needs of Africa and the participation of the world's young people. Mr. Kutesa will focus on strengthening the United Nations itself. We must continue our efforts to end all

forms of discrimination and to ensure that each and every member of the human family can enjoy their fundamental human rights.

The sixty-ninth session will be a period of great consequence for the well-being and shared fate of people and the planet. I look forward to working with the new President of the Assembly and with all Member States to do our part to end extreme poverty and to set the world on a peaceful, just and sustainable path.

Let us work together to maintain high ambition and to meet the expectations of the billions of people across the globe who look to the Assembly, this house of all nations, for dialogue, decisions and action to bring about the world that we want and a life of dignity for all.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Gambia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Tangara (Gambia): For Africa, the importance of the sixty-ninth session cannot be overemphasized, particularly as Africa assumes the presidency to chart the waters of the development agenda for 2015 and beyond. On behalf of the African Group, we would like to congratulate the current President of the General Assembly for his talented leadership as we move towards the conclusion of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, and pledge our continuous support for all his efforts for a seamless transition towards the sixty-ninth session.

Africa's accession to the presidency means for us, Africa, a sense of duty to contribute to the service of our global community of nations. The African Group will continue to work with the other groups in the spirit of mutual respect, compromise and consensus-building.

On behalf of the Group, we once again congratulate Sam Kutesa, who is an accomplished statesman.

(*spoke in French*)

We have had the opportunity to work with Mr. Kutesa as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda and we know his capability, the sense of good work done that characterizes him and his wisdom, since he guided us when we had a very young Minister for Foreign Affairs and the presence of Mr. Kutesa was greatly appreciated. We are convinced that the opportunity provided to him today will allow him to sow the seeds of enlightenment to illuminate the work of all who wish to strive for a better world living in harmony and without conflict.

(*spoke in English*)

We wish him success and have no doubt that he will live up to expectation. He has the support of Africa and, I believe, of all our colleagues present here.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, it is an honour to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. Mr. Kutesa takes over the helm of the General Assembly at a time when the world is continuing to face various global challenges and when the role of the General Assembly is becoming invaluable in finding comprehensive solutions to the increasing number of world issues.

The President-elect brings to his position extensive parliamentary and diplomatic experience. We hope that Mr. Kutesa will continue to lead the General Assembly successfully towards the promotion of peace and security and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, while working together with the States Members of the United Nations to define a sustainable development agenda beyond 2015.

The incoming President takes over from His Excellency Mr. John Ashe, who has been successful in leading this body during the past year. On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to express our deepest respect and gratitude to President Ashe for all his efforts and impressive action during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly on the issues that concern the nations of the world. We are confident that his extensive engagement with the United Nations system will continue in the coming years. We especially want to emphasize, and thank President Ashe for, his invaluable contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and setting the stage for the post-2015 era, as well as his efforts to advance the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council.

On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to pledge our full support to the President-

elect during his tenure and to wish him every success in carrying out his duties during the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, with regard to yesterday's terrorist act of the kidnapping at the Consul General of Turkey and diplomatic officers in Mosul, the members of the Group of Eastern European States reaffirm that terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, is criminal and unjustifiable regardless of its motivation and wherever, whenever and by whomsoever it is committed and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I have the honour to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States. On behalf of the Group, I would like to extend our congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, Foreign Minister of Uganda, on his election to this important position. We trust that he will serve well the collective good of the General Assembly.

We look forward to working with the President-elect during the sixty-ninth session. That will be an important year for the General Assembly as we work towards agreement on a new and transformative international development agenda. We welcome the priority that he has promised to give to the issue. Collectively we must ensure that the new agenda puts the world firmly on a path to end extreme poverty through successful sustainable development and to advance the protection, promotion and realization of human rights for all people, without discrimination or distinction of any kind or for any reason. We look to the President-elect to support and guide that collective endeavour throughout his term in office.

We would also like to express our Group's appreciation for the leadership of the outgoing President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. John Ashe. We are particularly grateful for his tireless efforts to promote dialogue and mutual understanding among Member States on the different aspects of the post-2015 development agenda.

On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, I wish the President and the President-elect every success in their important work.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): On behalf of the Member States of the Group of Asia-Pacific States, for which the United Arab Emirates has assumed chairmanship today, it is an honour to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

We also take this opportunity as a Group to thank His Excellency Mr. John Ashe, who has very ably led the General Assembly during the past year and who will no doubt continue to do so in the few months ahead.

The Member States of the Group remain committed to actively working alongside the Office of the President of the General Assembly. We offer our support to his ambitious and important agenda, which he has just outlined for us today. We wish him every success in this important role at this critical time in the world.

Drawing of lots for the seating protocol for the sixty-ninth regular session

The President: As mentioned in the *Journal of the United Nations*, we will now proceed to the drawing of lots to determine the Member State that will occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the sixty-ninth session. In accordance with the established practice, the Secretary-General draws the name of one Member State from a box containing the names of the Member States of the General Assembly. The delegation whose name is drawn will occupy the first seat of the General Assembly Hall, and the other countries will follow in the English alphabetical order. The same order will be observed in the Main Committees.

I now invite the Secretary-General to proceed with the drawing of lots.

Having been drawn by a lot by the Secretary-General, Cuba was chosen to occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall at the sixty-ninth session.

I thank the Secretary-General for the drawing of the lots.

Agenda item 6

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session

The President: I should now like to consult members with the view to proceeding to the election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly at the sixty-ninth session.

In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly,

> "The Vice-Presidents shall be elected after the election of the Chairmen of the six Main Committees, referred to in rule 98, in such as way as to ensure the representative character of the General Committee."

It is my understanding that, since the elections of the Chairpersons of the Main Committees will conform with decision 68/505, of 1 October 2013, on the "Interim arrangement on the pattern for the rotation of the chairs of the Main Committees of the General Assembly", it will not have an impact on the geographical distribution of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly and the representative character of the General Committee.

May I take it that the General Assembly therefore agrees to proceed to elect the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, we shall now proceed to the election of the 21 Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session.

All members of the General Assembly are eligible in this election, except the delegation already represented in the General Committee, namely, Uganda, the country whose representative has just been elected to the presidency of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session.

In accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3 of the annex to resolution 33/138, of 19 December 1978, the 21 Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session shall be elected according to the following pattern: five representatives from African States, five representatives from Asia-Pacific States, one representative from Eastern European States, three representatives from Latin American and Caribbean States, two representatives from Western European and other States and five representatives from the permanent members of the Security Council.

In accordance with paragraph 16 of General Assembly decision 34/401, the election of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly by secret ballot will be dispensed with when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled.

We shall proceed accordingly.

I shall now read the names on the slate of candidates:

African States: Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, the Niger, and Swaziland.

Asia-Pacific States: Cyprus, Kiribati, Oman, Pakistan and Tajikistan.

Eastern European States: Georgia.

Latin American and Caribbean States: Argentina, Grenada and Saint Lucia.

Western European and other States: Iceland and Portugal.

Since the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled in each region, I declare those candidates elected, in addition to the five representatives from the permanent members of the Security Council.

The following States have therefore been elected to vice-presidencies of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session: Argentina, Burkina Faso, China, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Georgia, Grenada, Iceland, Kiribati, Libya, the Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Swaziland, Tajikistan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the States that have just been elected Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session.

Before adjourning, I wish to inform members that, as agreed by the Chairs of the Main Committees, the consecutive meetings of the six Main Committees scheduled for today are postponed to Monday, 16 June 2014. An announcement in the *Journal of the United Nations* will follow.

I wish to remind members that after the election of the Chairpersons of the six Main Committees, the General Committee of the General Assembly for the sixty-ninth session will then be fully constituted in accordance with rule 38 of the rules of procedure.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.